

Having recently obtained a Technician class amateur radio operator license, I am beginning to wonder why I bothered. In my younger years I wanted to take up amateur radio as a hobby but was always put off by the Morse code requirement. Even as a youngster I could not see any need to demonstrate Morse code proficiency. The more I read and see it seems as though amateur radio has become nothing more than an old men's fraternal organization, and I can fully understand why many younger people are choosing not to pursue amateur radio as a hobby.

Those who are still in favor of Morse proficiency testing seem to have only three reasons for retaining the code requirements. First, there is the reason of history and preserving tradition. History and tradition are wonderful things so long as they are not an impediment to progress. As long as code testing is in place there will be no fresh infusion of ideas by the younger generation into the world of amateur radio. Who knows what exciting new means of communication may never happen because of this.

Secondly, there seems to be a lot of concern that in the event of a disaster CW will be the only emission type that may be able to be sent and received. If there is ever a disaster of those proportions, society will have far larger problems than communications. Besides, when was the last time someone in distress really thought about turning on his solid state microprocessor controlled radio and tapping out some Morse code for help?

Thirdly, many believe a code requirement will diminish the amount of inappropriate behavior on the air. Personally I have heard more than a few General and Extra class operators behave inappropriately. Anyway, if someone enjoys wreaking havoc on the airways, is not having a license really going to stop them?

Personally I have had a lifelong interest in electricity and electronics. Since finishing college I have worked in the computer field with a variety of operating systems, programming languages, and communications protocols. However, I can barely tell the difference between a *dit* and a *dah*. Does this somehow make me unworthy of communicating with people around the world on the HF bands?

Throughout the lengthy history of Morse code it has served the communications world well. I respect someone who has mastered and enjoys that mode of communication, but in this day and age with all the different emission types it hardly makes sense to require mastery of such an arcane method of communication.